



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 440 Rural and Urban Pharmacist Initiative 8/15/07

Representative Jeffery Mursau

Chairperson Hines and members of the Assembly Committee on Public Health:

Access to healthcare is critical to maintaining good public health. Earlier this session this committee passed Assembly Bill 90, which will help put more physicians in underserved areas of Wisconsin. There is another problem facing rural and urban Wisconsin; the lack of pharmaceutical care.

I'm offering Assembly Bill 440 to improve access to healthcare in underserved areas of Wisconsin. AB 440 will provide an incentive to Wisconsin residents enrolled in the University of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy to enter practice in an underserved part of the state. It has been brought to my attention that Concordia University in Mequon is considering starting a pharmacy program in 2008. I am working on an amendment that will open the program up to all schools in Wisconsin that are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

Under the bill, a resident pharmacy student may receive up to \$5,000 per year in the form of a loan from the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB). The student is limited to a lifetime cap of \$25,000. In exchange for receiving the loan, the recipient must agree to practice medicine in an underserved part of Wisconsin for six years. After completing the first year of practice, 10% of the loan is forgiven. After the second year, an additional 10% is forgiven; 10% after the third year; 10% after the fourth year; 20% after the fifth year; and 20% after the sixth year.

The definition for an underserved area is based off of the Department of Health and Human Services' rule 42 CFR part 5, appendix F. It is my understanding that this classification is likely to be phased out in the next year or two, so I will offer an amendment to change the definition to mirror the standards for a physician shortage area.

In summary, increasing access to healthcare is important for Wisconsin. AB 440 will provide residents in rural and inner city Wisconsin with better access to pharmacists.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in favor of AB 440.

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - January 22, 2007

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/01/22/story3.html>

AB-440

THE Business Journal

SERVING GREATER MILWAUKEE

BUSINESS PULSE SURVEY: Is there a need for a new hospital in Ozaukee County

Concordia may start pharmacy school

Would address shortage of pharmacists in state

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - January 19, 2007 by Julie Sneider

Concordia University Wisconsin is considering opening a pharmacy school to address what state health care industry experts describe as a severe shortage of pharmacists.

A feasibility study is under way, and the private liberal arts college in Mequon expects to decide by May whether to move ahead with what would be Wisconsin's second school of pharmacy, said Patrick Ferry, Concordia's president. The earliest Concordia could offer a program is fall 2008, Ferry said.

"Concordia is aware of the great need and demand for pharmacists," he said. "(The state) can't keep up with the requirements and growing needs in our community and across the country for pharmacists."

A pharmacy school would fit well with Concordia's existing health professional degree programs, such as undergraduate and graduate programs in nursing, physical therapy and occupational therapy, Ferry said.

"We've developed a good reputation (in the health professions) already," he said.

Wisconsin has just one pharmacy school, located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which is at capacity and hasn't increased the number of students it accepts annually since 2001, according to the Wisconsin Hospital Association, Fitchburg. In a recent report, the group identified pharmacists -- surpassing nurses -- as the largest work-force shortage in Wisconsin hospitals.

Before making a decision on the new school, Concordia officials must consider many "significant issues" not the least of which is money. The feasibility study will pinpoint the cost of building a facility. It also will address recruiting and hiring a dean and pharmacy faculty members, which already are in short supply nationally, Ferry said.

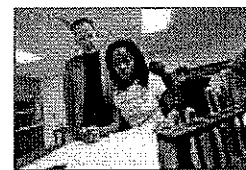
"We've begun doing a fair bit of work on it, and the real issues have nothing to do with whether we would have enough students," he said.

To achieve national accreditation as a professional pharmacy school, Concordia would have to grant what's known as a "Pharm.D.," which is doctor of pharmacy. Such programs usually require four to six years of education beyond undergraduate work. There are about 99 accredited pharmacy schools in the country.

National problem

The pharmacist shortage is a national problem affecting hospitals, clinics and retail pharmacies, said Judy Warmuth, author of the Wisconsin Hospital Association report and a vice president of the association. Several factors are driving the shortage -- the dramatic rise in prescription drug use, retail pharmacy chain expansion, and retirement of the existing generation of pharmacists.

Milwaukee-area hospital and retail pharmacy officials said Wisconsin's shortage is worse because it has only one pharmacy school.



Scott Paulus
Patrick Ferry (with student
Timeka Parker) ...
"Concordia is aware of the
great need and demand for
pharmacists."
[View Larger](#)

Hospital systems report that it takes three months to a year to fill a pharmacist job opening. Major health care systems in the area such as Aurora Health Care, which also operates a chain of retail pharmacies in eastern Wisconsin, are recruiting across the Midwest, nationally and over the Internet.

Glendale-based Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare offers \$5,000 signing bonuses to new pharmacists.

"We have an aggressive recruiting program and we pay competitive salaries," said Tom Zinda, Wheaton's director of recruitment and employment. "But it is a challenge. I'm not telling you that when a new retail pharmacy opens, I cheer."

To assist its study, Concordia has hired Curt Gielow, a former state representative from Mequon, as a consultant on the project.

"When they called and asked me to help, I told them I thought the state could use it; the industry needed another good quality pharmacy school," said Gielow, who is also a former pharmacist.

Gielow said Concordia is on a fast track to make a decision and he has met with Milwaukee-area health care leaders to drum up support. He's also trying to initiate discussions between Concordia and other campuses, including the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, about working together to open a pharmacy school in greater Milwaukee.

UWM interested

Randall Lambrecht, dean of the UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences, has been aware of the pharmacist shortage for years, and has advocated for UWM to be the site of a second pharmacy school.

"We have been looking at what the opportunities might be in southeastern Wisconsin," he said.

The UW-Madison School of Pharmacy doesn't have the resources to expand its student capacity, said Jeanette Roberts, the school's dean. Roberts said the school can admit 130 new students a year, and gets 300 to 400 applications for those spots.

"We're at full capacity with our physical facility, but that doesn't mean we can't be creative," she said.

Roberts has met with health care industry leaders about their work-force concerns. She said a Pharmacy School task force is looking at options to address the shortage. Among ideas being explored include online education and video streaming to offer some Pharmacy School education at remote UW campuses and at UWM. But the institution granting the degree would remain UW-Madison.

Lambrecht, while acknowledging that UW-Madison "has a great program," said Madison's enrollment limitations impact the entire state.

"What that has meant for southeastern Wisconsin is that we're just going to continue with a high vacancy rate for pharmacists," he said.

UWM could open a pharmacy school or be part of a joint venture with another campus but that would require approval from the UW Board of Regents, Lambrecht said.

Roberts said she understands that Wisconsin needs more pharmacists, but she cautioned that "we have to maintain quality graduates in order to optimize the health care provided to Wisconsin residents."

Just increasing the number of trained pharmacists in Wisconsin won't necessarily result in higher quality patient care, she said.

WISCONSIN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

To: Representative Hines and Members of the Assembly Committee on
Public Health

From: Judy Warmuth, Vice President, Workforce Development
Wisconsin Hospital Association

Date: August 15, 2007

RE: Testimony in Support of AB 440



Good Morning.

My name is Judy Warmuth and I am the Vice President of Workforce Development at the Wisconsin Hospital Association. I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk with you today in support of AB 440.

In 2006, the Wisconsin Hospital Association published, "Building a Healthcare Workforce for Wisconsin's Future". I have copies available for the committee. This report reviewed both the demand for and the capacity to provide education for five key healthcare occupations. Pharmacy was the first occupation discussed, as it is currently the most difficult occupational position for most of our hospitals to fill. This document also points out that there is currently a shortage of pharmacists and that future conditions will worsen as both the pharmacist workforce and Wisconsin residents age.

The future shortage will be caused by several factors that include increased demand by aging Wisconsin residents, an overall increase in the use of prescription medications, an aging pharmacist workforce that will be retiring in significant numbers, and a relatively static number of graduates from Wisconsin's pharmacy school. Solutions to these supply issues must be addressed immediately as it takes years of education to prepare a pharmacist for the workforce.

While there are a number of solutions that we must put in place to address future shortages, one of the simplest is to help students financially, early in their educational programs, when aid is needed most. Then offer incentives, such as loan forgiveness, to practice in areas where they are most needed. This helps encourage the pharmacists educated in Wisconsin to stay in Wisconsin.

In general, Wisconsin has trouble keeping its educated residents. Offers of better salaries, attractive jobs, research opportunities and urban lifestyles in other states are some of the reasons. Any and all efforts to keep our educated pharmacist workforce in Wisconsin should be utilized. AB 440 is attractive in that it expands an existing Wisconsin system to address the pharmacist workforce shortage by offering loans when students need them most, and then forgiving those loans when graduates practice in areas of the state where they are most needed.

This bill is good for the healthcare workforce and good for the health of Wisconsin.